

REMARKS

Claims 1-26, 29-31, and 39 are currently pending in the application. By this amendment, claim 26 is amended and claim 39 is added for the Examiner's consideration, and claims 27 and 28 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The above amendments do not add new matter to the application and are fully supported by the specification. For example, support for the amendments is provided in the claims as originally filed. Reconsideration of the rejected claims in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 1-25 are allowed. Applicants further appreciate the indication that claims 28 and 31 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. By this amendment, claim 28 is rewritten in independent form by amending claim 26 to incorporate the features of claims 27 and 28 and canceling claims 27 and 28. Accordingly, claim 26, and all claims that depend therefrom, should be allowed.

Moreover, claim 31 has been rewritten in independent form by adding new claim 39 which includes the features of original claims 26, 30, and 31. Accordingly, claim 39 should be allowed.

Entry of Amendment is Proper

Applicants submit that this amendment places the application in condition for allowance by amending claim 26 to incorporate the features of claim 27 and objected to claim 28 and canceling claims 27 and 28. Additionally, claim 31 has been rewritten in independent form by adding new claim 39 which includes the features of original claims 26, 30, and 31. Thus, the amendment does not raise any new issues that would require further search and/or consideration. Moreover, the amendment does not add new claims without canceling an equal number of claims. Therefore, entry of this amendment is proper. Alternatively, Applicants submit that this amendment places the application in better form for appeal.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,946,755 issued to Tamai et al. ("Tamai") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,894,887 issued to Kelsey et al. ("Kelsey"). Claims 27, 29, and 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for being unpatentable over Tamai in view of Kelsey and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,167,955 issued to van Brocklin et al. ("Van Brocklin"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

While Applicants do not agree that any proper combination of the applied art renders the claimed invention obvious, nevertheless, in order to advance prosecution, claim 28 has been rewritten in independent form by amending claim 26 to incorporate the features of claims 27 and 28 and canceling claims 27 and 28.

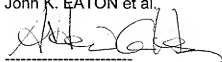
Accordingly, claim 26, and claims 29-31 which depends therefrom, should be allowed.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection over claims 26, 27, 29, and 30 be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that all of the claims are patentably distinct from the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below, if needed. Applicants hereby make a written conditional petition for extension of time, if required. Please charge any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Respectfully submitted,
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